

suit makers, textile producers, and the domestic sheep industry received a combination of tariff relief and incentives to stabilize employment and production in the United States. This program has been extremely successful, and stopped the precipitous decline in employment in the tailored suit industry.

However, these provisions expire next year. Because the suit industry must design their lines months in advance, the expiration of this program will affect pricing and competitiveness much earlier than the close of 2005.

Our proposal extends these provisions for an additional five years, and makes improvements in the program for all interested parties. We are pleased to note that our legislation has the strong support of the suit manufacturers, the garment workers' union—UNITE, the sheep association, and the textile industry. As the domestic tailored clothing industry and wool textile mills continue to face significant challenges maintaining employment and production as a result of an unlevelled playing field, an extension of this program is timely and vital to the continued health of this important manufacturing sector.

We hope our colleagues will join us in co-sponsoring this legislation.

IN SUPPORT OF THE NATIONAL
VISION STRATEGY

HON. DAVID E. PRICE

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 5, 2004

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Congressional Vision Caucus, I rise to recognize May as Healthy Vision Month, and to discuss the importance of the recommendations of the Vision Problems Action Plan, A National Public Health Strategy to the prevention of blindness and vision loss.

Good vision is critical to conducting activities of daily living, and it affects developmental learning, communication, work, health, and quality of life. Unfortunately, far too many people are at risk for losing their eyesight. More than 80 million Americans have a potentially blinding eye disease, 3 million have low vision, 1.1 million are legally blind, and an additional 200,000 are more severely visually impaired. Despite the fact that half of all blindness can be prevented, far too many people do not have access to the care they need. If current trends continue, the number of blind and visually impaired individuals will double by 2030.

Healthy Vision Month, a component of Healthy People 2010, is a national eye health campaign to raise awareness about the various conditions that can affect eyesight and cause vision loss. Additionally, a coalition of leading eye health experts have just released the Vision Problems Action Plan, A National Public Health Strategy to provide our nation with a framework for preventing vision loss. This groundbreaking study recommends that, in order to reduce the occurrence of vision loss and its accompanying disabilities, we must concentrate our efforts on three priority areas: prevention; access to care and treatment; and research.

Our public health and prevention campaign must ensure that vision programs at the Na-

tional Eye Institute (NEI) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have the resources they need to improve communication and education campaigns, increase surveillance, support epidemiology and prevention research; and implement appropriate program and policy changes.

In order to ensure access to and availability of treatment and rehabilitation services for individuals with vision loss, we must support programs at the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that remove barriers and improve access to eye exams currently covered under Medicare, such as diabetic eye exams and glaucoma detection for high risk populations. We must also strengthen the Medicare program to advance coverage for vision rehabilitation services as provided by orientation and mobility specialists, rehabilitation teachers, and low-vision therapists.

Finally, we must bolster our research efforts to improve our understanding of the eye and visual system in health and disease, and to develop the most effective means of prevention, treatment and rehabilitation. This report provides the roadmap we need to raise awareness about vision loss, give individuals the tools they need to prevent it, and give hope to the millions already suffering from vision loss that better treatments can be found.

As a co-chair of the Congressional Vision Caucus, I would like to thank all of the organizations involved in crafting this report, including the American Academy of Ophthalmology, the American Optometric Association, the CDC, Lighthouse International, the National Alliance For Eye and Vision Research, the NEI and most importantly, Prevent Blindness America. Prevent Blindness America should be commended for spearheading this effort, for bringing together this coalition of experts, and for its almost century-long dedication to preventing vision loss.

CELEBRATING THE 70TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE INCORPORATION
OF THE TOWN OF TAOS, NM

HON. TOM UDALL

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 5, 2004

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an historic and outstanding community—Taos, New Mexico—and to congratulate the residents on the celebration of the town's 70th anniversary.

On May 7, 2004, the Town of Taos will commemorate the 70th anniversary of its incorporation as a general law municipality in the State of New Mexico. This event will also mark 389 years since the King of Spain colonized the Taos area in 1615—five years before the Pilgrims landed in New England.

Further, this will be the 209th anniversary since the Don Fernando de Taos land grant was declared an Ayuntamiento under the laws of the Spanish government in 1795. Finally, this will also mark 156 years since the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed by the United States and Mexico in 1848.

It is the traditions of the long-established cultures that make Taos a proud community, a desirable place to live, and a wonderful place to visit. Although the Town of Taos celebrates its 70th birthday this month, we must not forget that it is an area that has been home to American Indians for nearly 1,000 years. The arrival of the Spanish Conquistadores, led by Capitán Hernan Alvarado on August 29, 1540, marked the beginning of the three cultures that would eventually dominate the area.

Yet other newcomers emerged in the 18th century with the arrival of French and American traders. Taos, no more than a tiny mountain village, was transformed into a bustling trade center as wagon trains, frontier scouts and mountain men gathered. Taos was also the home of famous frontier scout Kit Carson, who is commemorated in a state park and museum.

The once geographically-isolated village became more accessible when the Atcheson, Topeka and the Santa Fe Railroad reached Santa Fe. The era of America's love affair with the West had begun. As tales of the region's beauty spread, tourists, writers and artists from the east discovered northern New Mexico's uniqueness. Some settled permanently.

By the end of the Roaring Twenties, Taos had an established reputation as a thriving art colony. Writer D.H. Lawrence is credited with saying, "I think the skyline of Taos is the most beautiful I have ever seen. . ." Perhaps the most prominent resident of the 20th century was none other than artist Georgia O'Keeffe.

The incorporation of the Town of Taos began as a community-wide initiative after several large structure fires destroyed most of the plaza buildings in existence at the time.

Community volunteers undertook an effort to organize a volunteer fire department, a community water supply system and a municipal form of government to ensure stability over the long term.

Taos, sometimes described as "The Soul of the Southwest," is a flourishing community today in New Mexico. A hundred galleries showcase the works of artists past and present, local and international. Scattered within walking distance around the plaza and along side streets lined with bright hollyhocks and geraniums, the galleries invite thousands of tourists each year. World-class contemporary fine art, southwestern art, sculpture, ceramic, crafts, jewelry, and weavings are long-time economic staples of the town.

Wheeler Peak at over 13,000 feet looks down on the world-class Taos Ski Basin. During the warmer months, the area provides a scenic chair lift and trails for hiking, biking, horseback trips, llama treks and fishing.

Today, as in the past, Taos is a mecca for a wide range of people who are attracted by its mystique, unique heritage, historical significance, and beauty.

Mr. Speaker, I could speak for hours on the rich history of Taos. Let me finish by saying that this special occasion is a time for all Taosños to honor 70 years of proud and noble history. While we are grateful for the past seven decades, I know that the best is yet to come. I ask that my colleagues join me as we honor all the contributions Taos has made to New Mexico.